



**The Teachers
at the University
of Puerto Rico-
Rio Piedras**

Dr. MILLARD HANSEN

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by

Millard Hansen

Professor of Social Science
University of Puerto Rico

Social Science Research Center
University of Puerto Rico
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by Professor of the University of Puerto Rico - Rio Piedras

by

William F. Cannon

Professor of Social Science
University of Puerto Rico

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The second of the five principal issues at the university which we are studying concerns the faculty. We have interviewed 8% of the faculty. They reported to us their perception of the proper and improper missions of the university and the role of the faculty. They reported their salary, the faculty in which they worked, their rank, academic degrees, and leaves. They reported the occupation, income, and years of schooling of their fathers and paternal grandfathers. They described the assignment of their tasks, the time dedicated to them, and something of how they performed them. They gave us information as well as their judgments about many questions - recruitment to the faculty, the criteria for permanence, promotions, the curricula, teaching methods, the policy for the admission of students, and criteria about the budget and the source of university funds.

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An interim paper of the research project to study policy issues at the University of Puerto Rico - Río Piedras. The project began in July 1972 at the Social Science Research Center and is continuing.

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The staff interviewed 109 of the 1,354 members of the faculty during three semesters beginning in August 1972. The larger group interviewed were 85 persons with ten or more years service, about half of them professors and half of them associate professors. The smaller group interviewed were 25 persons in their third year of service, 60% of them instructors and 28% assistant professors. Of the entire faculty of 1354 44% hold the rank of professor and associate professor. In the institutions of the United States in 1972-73, half hold those ranks. (Bayer, 1974, p. 49)

More than 80% of this faculty reported that the most important mission of the university was either to teach or to socialize the students. Twice as many of the older group reported that teaching was the principal university mission as compared with socialization, whereas the younger group reported more often that socialization was the principal mission (48%) and an almost equal group (40%) reported that teaching was the principal mission. We did not anticipate this difference of view and, therefore, we did not ask further questions about it. Possibly the difference indicates a historical trend. As institutions of higher education grow larger, it may be that students begin to expect different things of the university and more of the faculty seek to satisfy the expectations.

The crucial meaning of this report, however, is the rejection of research and scholarship as the principal university mission. It has been customary for centuries to expect university faculties to preserve, interpret, expand, and disseminate learning in their fields of particular competence. To teach students was a consequence of the dedication to learning, and the socialization of students crossing the threshold into adulthood was a consequence of their association with the faculty and with learning. But for more than 80% of a faculty to assign teaching and socialization as principal university missions is to break with custom and also to reject the missions assigned to the university by

the public authority. The university statute of 1942 established the following missions for the University of Puerto Rico - "To impart higher learning; to make scientific research in the various fields of learning; to study the fundamental problems of Puerto Rico; to extend to the people the benefits of culture; to prepare public servants." The 1966 university statute assigned similar missions although in less precise language and with less emphasis on scientific research and the study of fundamental problems of Puerto Rico - "To transmit and increase learning by means of the sciences and the arts, making it serve the community through the action of its professors. To contribute to the cultivation and enjoyment of the ethical and esthetic values of culture." These teachers are not professors dedicated to scholarship and research with teaching and socialization as consequences of their learning. 80% of the younger faculty and 71% of the older group spend no time whatever on research. Those few who do some research spend usually little or not more than a quarter of their time on the research, and no one reported any intention to publish the research results in a review in Puerto Rico. These teachers disregard the customary and statutory assignments of research, scholarship, and the study of the fundamental problems of Puerto Rico, and their students also disregard these three major assignments. The students we interviewed almost universally stated that the purpose of the university was to socialize them - to prepare

them for their adult occupational and other roles and to assist them in defining their identities.

We were surprised when the faculty reported that they thought all the missions at the university were appropriate, that none should not be undertaken at the institution. Perhaps the question was not entirely clear, or perhaps they were not interested in university missions enough to determine whether some of them were not proper. Even so, it is surprising at a time when criticism of higher education is loud and varied both within and outside universities. A handful did note one improper role - giving credentials for employment or further study. This also is very odd. Few observers doubt that this is one of the principal roles of higher education, it probably determines the motivation of a great many students, and yet this alone was noted, albeit by very few, for objection. Many who write about higher education, for example, have objected to the use of the university as an agent for social change, as an agent for direct community action, and for political indoctrination. One of the shrewdest observers of American higher education noted that, while unlikely in his estimate of the situation, there was a possible danger grave enough to be alert about: that young revolutionaries might destroy higher education root and branch as a step towards wrecking this society to make way for the revolutionaries' image of a better society. (Ashby, 1971, p. 95) In their study of a large number of faculty members, Seymour

Martin Lipset and Everett C. Ladd Jr. found that many younger professors were troubled by the political demands of radical students but were fearful that if they used the university as a revolutionary agency they would destroy its autonomy and with it their only refuge from which to inquire about and encourage revolution. (Lipset and Ladd 1971) This was one of the principal factors in what they called "The divided professoriate" which "fragment the professoriate, to shatter any semblance of moral unity, to rob it of its capacity for decisive action before the troubles which beset it." (Lipset, 1971, p. 60) Perhaps those we interviewed are aware of this division but chose not to note it in their responses. Still another mission, that of encouraging and facilitating social mobility, especially of the poor and those at an ethnic disadvantage, has been objected to by many writers about higher education not only as improper but also as impractical, (Jencks, 1972 p. 195) but no one we interviewed suggested this to us.

The older professors were evenly distributed among the faculties of social sciences, natural sciences, business administration, and general studies, with a few more than the average in education and only half the average in humanities. The younger group were almost half from social sciences and none from natural sciences, constituting a serious imbalance in our sample. They were evenly distributed in business administration, education, and general studies but with more in humanities than in these three faculties. We interviewed

nearly all members of the faculty in their third year of service, and therefore this considerable lack of balance among the faculties is a fact, not the result of our interview procedures. Further inquiry is needed to seek an explanation for this distribution. Further inquiry should also determine how many young members of the faculty are employed by contract and do not have appointments to a plaza.

Faculty rank is distributed as expected - those with ten or more years service are about equally divided between professors and associate professors, those in their third year are instructors in 60% of the cases and assistant professors in 28%. Among the older group, 37% held the doctorate and 61% the master degree, while only 16% of the younger group had the doctorate and 68% the masters degree. In all the Río Piedras Faculty, men hold 65% of the doctorates. Nearly half the older group have taken sabbatical leave from the university, but a surprising 38% have had no leave whatever. The sabbatical leave of course is very widely used for additional study leading to the doctorate, and therefore the large number of professors with ten or more years service who have not used the leave are probably those who have not sought a higher degree. 84% of the younger group have had no leave of any kind and only 12% had leave with economic aid. This group probably is carrying heavy expenses of family and perhaps debts from prior advanced study while postponing further study until a sabbatical leave might become available four years after we interviewed

them. But there is no evidence that leaves are being used to advance academic preparation.

The salaries of the older group are about \$900 monthly for half of them and about \$1,150 for the other half. Such salaries place them, of course, at the top of the income pyramid in Puerto Rico (the Planning Board reported current median income for men is \$193 monthly), as is appropriate for persons in their professions. Salaries of the younger group are about equally divided between an average of \$700 monthly and \$900, which makes their incomes also consistent with their professional occupation. The older group earns around five times the median income for men in Puerto Rico, and the younger group around four times as much. Complaints about salary, of course, are never based on distance from a median but, instead, upon comparisons with other groups much closer to one. For example, these professors might compare their salaries unfavorably with those in mainland institutions and also unfavorably with the incomes of other professionals in Puerto Rico such as doctors and lawyers.

Our colleagues in the older group were usually in their fifties and had served the university many years, a fifth of them for more than 25 years. They grew up before the Second World War and came to the faculty during the fifties when there were fewer than 6,000 regular students in Río Piedras in contrast with the 18,000 here now. 85% were married. 65% of the group were women, which exceeds the average at the university.

(53% are men) and constitutes a bias in our sample. We met some resistance and avoidance during the interviewing, and possibly those who accepted the interviews, which were done by a woman, were less resistant than their male colleagues.

The younger group were typically in their thirties although nearly half of them were older - 28% in their forties and 20% in their fifties. Further inquiry should perhaps be made to determine why nearly half the group are so old in their rank and year of university service. Either they have come from other positions, such as teaching in the elementary or secondary schools, or perhaps work in government or business. Possibly they have worked at the university several years on contracts before being appointed to a plaza. The younger half of the group, those in their thirties, grew up after the Second World War and entered the university recently when it was a very large institution. Unlike the older group, 56% of the younger group are men, which is slightly more than the average (53%). A fourth of the younger group are not married while three-fourths are married.

The fathers of the older group are in the upper fifth of the population (professional, managerial, and owners of businesses) in almost three-fourths of the cases, and nearly a fourth were children of fathers in the lower middle class (clerical and sales); only three persons had blue collar workers as fathers. The incomes reported, however, are a bit lower than one would expect for these occupational levels, with

almost two-fifths earning around \$5,000 annually and only a third earning \$10,00 or more. Years of school also are not quite consistent with the occupational level, with 17% having the B.A. degree and 9% additional study. It is of course common for most of us to place our parents a bit higher in the social hierarchy when confronted with interview questions. Furthermore, the reported incomes were markedly higher than median incomes in Puerto Rico for the years the fathers were active, and of course the immense expansion of schooling, especially at the level of higher education, had not occurred. So, clearly, most of these fathers are upper fifth and only three are workers, while none was in the lower, indigent level.

Their paternal grandfathers were in the same levels as their fathers in almost half the cases, and since those we interviewed are by occupation, schooling, and income in the upper fifth, these are stable families without social mobility. But 22% of the grandfathers were blue-collar workers, and in these cases there was mobility from grandfather to father generation.

The younger group are a bit lower in the social hierarchy. Half their fathers had upper fifth occupations (in contrast with 72% of the fathers of the older group) and 20% of their fathers were blue-collar workers. Incomes reported are almost the same (a third above \$10,000, a third or more around \$5,000, and about a fifth less than \$2,500), which probably must be explained by the general rise in income since the fathers of

the older group were economically active. A fourth of the fathers of the younger group had the B.A. degree, which perhaps suggests the expansion of higher education as a historical trend, but none of these fathers studied beyond the undergraduate B.A. degree. Their grandfathers in about the same proportion (22% of the older group and 28% of the younger group were blue-collar workers, but a very large majority were in the upper fifth of the population by occupation. The incomes reported were a bit lower than the occupational level (40% less than \$2,500) and a good many did not know the incomes of their grandfathers. 12% of the grandfathers had the B.A. degree and 8% of them studied further. As with the older faculty group, so in nearly the same proportion this group also has come from upper fifth levels of the population and social mobility has not often been present.

The university task, which at this institution is usually referred to in Spanish, tarea académica, even when one speaks or writes in English, is usually proposed by the department director, although more initiative of course is used by the older professors. The director and the professor discussed the task and reached an accord in 39% of the cases of the older but only in 20% of the younger professors, and in 72% of the cases the director proposed the task to the professor in contrast with only 44% of the cases of the older group. This is, of course expected. The teaching assignment was usually made because it was necessary to have an instructor for an existing

course, and in only a third of the cases of both interview groups was the assignment the result of the desire of the professor to teach in his field of specialization. The director evaluated the achievement of the professors task most often by talking with him (over 40% of the responses) and the next most frequent response (36%) was that the director made his evaluation by talking with the professor and by receiving a report from a special evaluation committee. There were virtually no visits to the classes taught by the professors, no questionnaires given to students, very rare conversations with other professors, and no examination of published research. Evaluation is obviously very informal in many cases and based upon little direct evidence. The evaluating committees which are mentioned, if I may infer this from what deans and department directors told me when I interviewed some of them, probably acted only prior to the giving of permanent tenure, and after that at the five year point in the professor's career he became free of scrutiny in any formal way by colleagues, students, or administration. A case can be made for members of the faculty who are primarily teachers and do no research, but the degree of unaccountability reported here for such teachers seems excessive. Student complaints we have heard about excessive absenteeism, reliance on textbooks, and repetitive, stale presentations of material suggest that such poor performance is easily permitted when the instructor is so accountable to his colleagues or to the administration. The

growing opposition to faculty tenure among many administrations, public authorities, and writers about higher education, is certainly fostered by this absence of accountability and the frequent poor performance reported by students, who were the only source of evidence available. A case can also be made against promotion based only on published research. Publish or perish does often promote trivial research at the expense of deeper analysis for longer time periods and in that sense becomes, in terms of the value of the academic intellect, publish and perish. But promotion and tenure based on published research, and also salary and task assignments based on published research, constitute accountability and tend at least to encourage diligence if not excellence of performance. Furthermore, if one perceives the interpretation, expansion, and dissemination of learning as the principal and indispensable mission of the university, then a total disregard of research publication in the evaluation of the faculty is a mistaken policy.

About half the older professors report working between 30 and 39 hours on university tasks and about a third of the younger faculty work similar hours. A third of the older faculty are working from 40 to 55 hours weekly and 44% of the younger group work these longer hours. A fifth of each group reported working less than 30 hours. The older group give variously 6, 9, or 12 hours to classroom teaching in somewhat equal numbers - 22% give 6 hours, 20% give 9 hours, and 34% give 12 hours. The

younger group are giving more time to classroom teaching - 60% give 12 hours although 28% teach 9 hours or fewer. A third of the older faculty spend 10 hours or less to prepare their courses, a fourth spend less than 15 hours, and another third spends less than 20 hours - so that if their average time in classroom teaching is about nine hours, they are spending a little less than twice that time to prepare their presentations. Hours of preparation reported by the younger faculty are much the same. Most of the faculty spend no time on research, and those who do some research spend usually fewer than 8 hours a week on it. Nearly all the faculty spend some time in committee work, about half of them four or fewer hours weekly. Few spend from 5 to 8 hours, but 20% of the older and 12% of the younger spend 9 hours or more, which suggests that these persons at the time of interview probably had particular committee assignments, perhaps on the curriculum or perhaps on personnel evaluation. We did not inquire about hours in their offices to counsel students, and none of them volunteered information that they spent time on such counseling. Few of either group spent any time on administrative tasks, and those who did spent two or three hours on such work. In view of the considerable opinion that a major university mission is student socialization, it is surprising that no one interviewed about the time they spent on teaching, course preparation, committee work, and administrative work took note of socialization through counseling. Of course, many of us being interviewed are like good soldiers

who never volunteer.

So few of the professors interviewed are engaged in research that an inquiry about research methods has limited value, but most of those doing research do so through readings and the study of documents, not by field work or experiment. As to the teaching methods and materials they thought most effective, a third of both groups thought explanations by the instructor were the most valuable. 14% of the older and 20% of the younger faculty thought the analysis and discussion of readings were the most important methods. About a third combined their preferences in favor of instructor explanations, the analysis and discussion of readings, and the quality of the readings chosen for analysis and discussion. No professor mentioned independent student work or the preparation of papers and essays. I have noticed here a marked preference for talking over writing, and for talking in the conversational manner of the tertulia rather than in more formally organized ways. I suspect that informal talking is the basic procedure in the classroom, and the students are not required to do independent analysis, to talk formally in meetings with the professors as they do in tutorial circumstances in many institutions, and they write scarcely anything during their stay at the university. Such teaching procedures are unlikely to contribute to the growth of independent thought among our students, to the acquisition of skill in the effective, analytic reading of books and papers, or of competence in precise, written expression. This is

unfortunate. In the present society there are exigent demands for all these capacities of independent thought, analytic reading, and writing. Among the rapidly increasing number of critics of American general education, most of whom are so critical that they believe the undertaking has failed and should be abolished, some have proposed substitute curricula based on the acquisition of the kind of competence noted in the previous sentence. Instead of very informal talking about an enormous variety of things in our long cultural heritage, students might be prepared better for competence in adult work and private affairs too by the substitution of a curriculum designed to improve competence in problem solving, analytical reading, and written expression. (For such a suggestion, see Ashby, 1971, p. 103)

The factors which ought to determine the curriculum, according to the older faculty, were the personal development of the student (35% of the responses), the knowledge and skills of the discipline in which a course lies (20%), and preparation for future employment (17%). The rest (28%) combined all these factors. The younger faculty replied twice as frequently that the curriculum should prepare the student for his future employment (31% as compared with the 17% of the replies of the older faculty). Also more of them (28%) thought the curriculum should satisfy the knowledge and intellectual skills of the material. They agreed about the importance of personal development of the student as a purpose of the curriculum (38%). But

they were much less likely than the older faculty to answer that all three factors should go into the construction of the curriculum (only 8%). Again the inclination of the faculty is clear in favor of socialization of the students including preparation for their employment, and learning itself, by contrast, is much less regarded. The question, of course, does not touch more detailed issues about general education, upper division studies, skill competence, and preparation for employment as alternative approaches. A curriculum aimed principally at personal development and preparation for employment could seek such ends by any of the kinds of curriculum currently in much dispute.

Recruitment of these members of the faculty resulted from institutional initiative in half the cases and the individual's initiative in the other half of the cases. They learned of a vacancy from the department director in half the cases, but we failed, unfortunately, to ask a further question: How did the director know the candidate in order to inform him of the vacancy? The individual took the initiative to look for a position by writing the department in a few instances and of responding to the information about a vacancy received from friends or from others studying where they also were studying. Only one of those we interviewed learned of a vacancy by reading of it in the press or a review. Recruitment, that is, is an informal procedure. This necessarily means that only a few candidates for a position are known to the appointing agents

of the institution. A wider search for candidates might improve the quality of those appointed.

We asked the younger faculty what factor they thought most important in the decision to give permanent tenure in the university. Almost half said years of service, that is the requirement that they serve five years before gaining tenure. It is surely a bureaucratic response. None of them thought that published research was a factor. A fourth thought that teaching efficiency evaluated by class visits or by an evaluating committee would be the most important factor in the decision. 28% thought that services to the university would be the most decisive factor. Seniority and services to the institution, in other words, rather than demonstrated competence in either research, scholarship, or teaching, are perceived as the factors leading to permanence. If these are the criteria for lifetime contracts after five years work in the university, the tenure system is very unlikely to encourage good performance of essential university tasks. This swift gentleness in giving permanent tenure along with a minimum of scrutiny of task performance are likely to permit such careless performance. The only modest requirement of competence is the pending regulation, which reflects present practice, of not giving permanence until the candidate has the M.A. degree.

We asked the older group what factors they thought were important in promotion in rank. Only 7% of course, thought research publications were important, and only 14% thought

teaching efficiency evaluated by class visits or by a committee was important. Almost 80%, consequently, perceived essential bureaucratic reasons for promotion - 41% said required years of service and another 15% said years of service in addition to earning a degree. The pending regulation and current practice do require the doctorate for promotion from associate professor to the rank of professor, but responses to our question took no note of this.

We asked both groups about the use of salary to reward merit. The older group were evenly divided between those who knew of no member of the faculty receiving more than the established scale and those who did know of such persons. Two-thirds of the younger faculty knew of no person with a salary above the established scale and a fourth knew of such persons. We asked what reason explained the payments above the scale when these were known to those we interviewed. Half of those who knew of such higher salaries said they were paid to retain the professor and frustrate his acceptance of the offer of a position elsewhere, and a smaller number (15 persons) responded that the higher salary represented favoritism by the department director. No one replied that the professor's merits were rewarded by the higher salary. These professors, in other words, perceive the salary scale as a standard and not as a minimum with higher salaries being paid for merit. It is a bureaucratic perception. None of these professors seemed to be aware of the proposals in the pending university regulation for a salary

range which would establish a minimum for designated ranks, years of service, and academic preparation while leaving way for higher salaries for merit. Almost three-fourths of the younger faculty knew of no case of the payment of a higher salary. None of these reported to us that higher salaries were paid for merit.

The granting of permanent tenure, promotions, and a higher salary based on merit are ways of encouraging better performance of university work. The professors we interviewed did not perceive this, or if they did perceive it, they did not report it, and perhaps one could infer that they did not support the policy of awarding tenure, promotion, and higher salary to encourage better performance. Here as was evident in reports about evaluation of task performance, those interviewed perceived a gentle permissiveness in the institution. Possibly they approved it. The deans and directors I interviewed were aware of this gentleness, but they usually objected to it.

The older group were divided about the issue of more open admissions of students to the university system - 47% recommended the admission of more students although half of these made the more open admission conditional upon increased university resources. 40% without conditions opposed the admission of more students. The group would be expected to be less favorable to more open admissions to the Río Piedras campus as distinct from the university system with its five two-year regional colleges and one four-year regional college already

established and more planned for the future. The younger group were more emphatic in favoring more open admissions (68%) with only a fourth opposing them.

We asked what criteria should determine who ought to be admitted to the university. The older group clearly favored the combination of three criteria - the motivation of the student to enter, his high school grades, and his score on the examination of the College Entrance Examination Board. Very few were satisfied with any of the three criteria alone. Only 17% favored the existing policy, a reliance on high school grades and the entrance examination as equal components of the entrance index. The younger faculty had substantially the same opinions except that a few more of them (24%) did favor the present policy.

We asked about the increasingly disputed issue of who should pay for higher education. Half of both groups believe without any condition that the students and their families should pay a larger share of the cost, and almost another fourth believe this if provision is made for low-income families. A fourth are opposed to putting a larger share of the cost on the families. We also inquired about asking students to pay more by means of loans payable after their graduation, a rapidly growing practice in higher education in the United States. Over half both groups favor this although some note that if needed students should also have economic aid while studying. Almost half oppose this type of financing. Students whose

families have middle and higher incomes predominate at the university and as graduates they earn much more than those without a university degree, and therefore it is clear that the general tax funds are being used to subsidize much of the cost of this education for those in the middle and upper income levels. There is, as Jencks has recently argued (Jencks, 1972, p. 38) no convincing reason why public funds should subsidize a higher education which benefits a small group in the population. Public subsidy is necessary for important services which benefit everybody (public parks, for example) or which benefit those unable to pay for them (patients in public hospitals), but universities are not like public parks or free hospitals. To the argument that society needs the persons prepared in the universities, one may answer that there is no danger that candidates will not come to get this preparation because they know how beneficial it will be for them.

There is little disagreement among the faculty about how the university budget should be distributed. One-third of the older faculty would assign the largest share of the budget to teaching materials, another third believed students should get the principal part, and a third thought the faculty should have the major share. None of these would give a major share to either administration or buildings and grounds. The younger faculty differed in that more than half of them would assign the major part of the budget to the students. It was a highly diffuse question meant only to detect major preferences to

receive university funds. No major preference between teaching materials, students, and faculty was expressed. When we asked about the distribution of funds for education between the public university and the public schools, the principal answer was to increase both, which of course evaded the question. That the faculty wants more money for the institution and more for students, teaching materials, and themselves is not surprising. How they would choose among carefully defined priorities we do not know.

We ended the interview asking what other questions the project ought to consider. More than half said nothing. The only issue mentioned under this invitation to take the initiative was the pending university regulation (25% of the older and 12% of the younger faculty). The negative response did not suggest a vigorous concern among these professors for a study of their institution. Or as suggested before, perhaps they are good soldiers who never volunteer.

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